THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) During the last three years *i.e.* 2000-2003, 14 officials working in the Ministry of External Affairs died in harness while posted abroad.

(b) and (c) The Ministry provides jobs to the dependents of the deceased on compassionate grounds keeping in view the number of vacancies allocated to this category under Direct Recruitment quota, and also financial guidelines that have been prescribed by the Planning Commission. During the last three years, the Ministry received applications from the dependents of 10 officials who had died while posted abroad. These applications were considered in accordance with the existing guidelines on filling of posts on compassionate grounds, and none of them were found to be eligible.

(d) At present, there are 17 eligible cases of compassionate appointments pending with the Ministry.

(e) Appointment on compassionate grounds to a dependent/family member of a Government Servant who died in Service are considered sympathetically, and jobs are provided to eligible candidates whenever vacancies become available in accordance with the existing Government rules and guidelines.

POK Prime Minister's statement regarding Indo-Pak talks

2649. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have come across statement made by the POK Prime Minister that the armed struggle would intensify if Kashmiris were ignored during the parleys between India and Pakistan; and

(b) if so, whether Government conveyed any reaction to Pakistan on such remarks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) From time to time, Pakistani leaders and those in POK have made statements contrary to the Simla Agreement and international norms and have attempted to justify their sponsorship of cross border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir as "legitimate armed struggle"

(b) There can be no justification for terrorism and it must be eradicated wherever it exists. Government is firmly committed to fight the menace of cross border terrorism till it is decisively eliminated.

India has also made it clear to Pakistan that conducive atmosphere for a sustained dialogue necessarily required an end to cross border terrorism and dismantling of the infrastructure of support to terrorism in Pakistan.

Extremist activities from Nepal

2650. DR. A.R. KIDWAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Nepal had become haven for criminals and a large number of extremists activities are operating in Nepal;

(b) if so, whether India and Nepal have signed an agreement to share criminal intelligence through diplomatic channels;

(c) if so, to what extent this has helped both the countries to check the criminal menace operating for long in India and Nepal; and

(d) the further steps being taken to improve the situation of controlling the criminal activities in both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (d) Government of India is concerned about misuse of the open India-Nepal border by terrorist and criminal elements for activities inimical to India's interest and is seized of the matter. There is close co-operation between Nepal and India and both countries have stated that they would not allow their territory to be used fo activities inimical to the interests of either country. Measures have been taken to enhance co-operation with Nepal, including in the field of intelligence and effective border management. A bilateral institutional mechanism has also been evolved which includes a Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary Level Talks to address issues relating to maintenance of peace and security and prevention of criminal activities in the India-Nepal border areas. Regular dialogue of Customs officials also takes place under the Agreement for Co-operation to control Unauthorised Trade. The Special Service Bureau has been deployed along the border with Nepal to strengthen security in